SLAVERY

IN

THE SOUTHERN STATES.

BY

A CAROLINIAN.

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Rec. 55 M.50 no.4

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CAMBRIDGE:
METCALF AND COMPANY,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

The following article is published at the request of a friend of the author, in Boston, to whom it was sent as an answer to the question, What do you think of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" at the South? It is published in the hope of inducing calmer thought on the subject of slavery than is likely to be the result of pictorial writing.

August, 1852.

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"I cannot imagine a more splendid career, intellectually speaking, than that of a slave-owner in a slave state, who is thoroughly awakened to the difficulty of his position." — *The Author of Friends in Council.*

To preach distant reform is very cheap philanthropy, — the cheaper in proportion to the distance. The feeling of self-satisfaction exists without the necessity of personal sacrifice. Hence the temptation that betrays sometimes good men into ill-considered zeal. The danger is, that recrimination and bitter blood be the only result; for those whose faults are held up for blame are tempted into the easy answer of pointing to faults "at home." And so such attempts at reform generally end in harm. We can call to mind no instance in which such intervention is friendly, or held to be friendly. Certainly not between those claiming to be equals in moral cultivation. England has succeeded in putting an end to Suttee in India; but Sir Henry Bulwer was sacrificed in Spain to Intervention, and Lord Palmerston's foreign policy

has ended in complaints that Englishmen are not safe anywhere on the Continent. Such must always be the case as long as human nature has its weaknesses, and when these cease the reformer's occupation will be gone. A reformer need scarcely hope to achieve any usefulness unless those to whom he appeals are satisfied of his friendly disposition, for which the best guarantee is his living among them. Another requisite for the reformer is the opportunity for self-sacrifice, which is the only proof of disinterestedness that will avail much. But his greatest power is such a complete acquaintance with the institution he attacks, and the character of those who uphold it, as will enable him judiciously to take advantage of what is good in them both, to aid him in grappling with the evil. For as there is no prevailing error which has not its leaven of truth, so there is no institution which has not some natural fitness for the circumstances under which it has been developed; and hence we believe that no attempt at reform is wise which begins with intolerance.

All these requisites to practical usefulness have been wanting in those who have declaimed against slavery and its abuses; and consequently the effect of their declamations has been to give rise to recrimination, until the North and the South know

each other through their vices more familiarly than through their virtues. The consequence, too, has been excitement of feeling at the South, which, it cannot be denied, interferes with her calmness of judgment on many points of slavery. And, moreover, she has been led very naturally to turn to the bright side of the picture by way of relief from the many exaggerated horrors that are held perseveringly up to her, until she is apt to forget that there are in slavery, as in all social systems, many errors which only time, and caution, and serious thought, can correct. But it is time now for the South to have done with the weakness which has betrayed her into intemperate heat or carelessness. She is forgetful of her own dignity if she enters into a war of recrimination, in which the battle is not to the strongest, but to the most vulgar; or if she allows any misrepresentations from abroad to induce a frame of mind that is unfavorable to the discharge of her duties. She is unjust to herself if she is tempted by the bright side of her institutions to deny the darkness of the other. We know that she is schooling herself to indifference to the violent Abolition abuse of the North, and that what she has done for the elevation of the negro has not been under a pressure from without, but rather at

the suggestions of her own sense of duty. But still there lingers some weakness of temper, some over-sensitiveness, which betrays itself, we think, in public opinion, that is too quick to charge her own men with "unsoundness" on this question. We would have her act up to the dictates of conscience, acknowledge her great responsibilities and all the rights of the slave, set herself earnestly to fulfil the duty that God has thrown upon her, and, as she yields nothing to the prejudices of the North, yield nothing to her anger at their violent expression.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" is the latest attack upon slavery. The book contains all the arguments against the institution, vivified in dramatic scenes of great power, and made attractive by highly-wrought sketches, imaginative chiefly, though, we are assured, not extravagant. We may not doubt what we hear of its unprecedented sale, nor that its authoress has refused ten thousand dollars for the copyright. We confess to having read the book with much excitement, under the influence of which we wrote many pages in its refutation. But we soon felt that we had fallen into a too common error, and we tore up our pages at the suggestion of the preceding train of thought. We shall not make any question of love or hate

with this book, but shall content ourselves with an effort to derive such profit from it as may be suggested even from the midst of its extravagance and injustice.

The "moral end" of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is to bring out in a strong light the evils of the complete dependence of one man upon the arbitrary will of another. We have a variety of vivid scenes to illustrate the power of the master in separating the families of slaves, in destroying their moral character, and in scourging them even to death. In these sketches her zeal has got the better of the authoress, and she has drawn a most wild and unreal picture of slavery. The consequence is, that the book, with its vast circulation, will do infinite injury. Its dramatic power will have no other effect upon the country than to excite the fanaticism of one portion and to arouse the indignation of the other. It will carry an erroneous picture of slavery to those who are only too eager to misunderstand, and will serve to confirm that increasing Southern opinion which sees only hatred and misconception of us at the North. Its well-seasoned horrors will give a new birth to Abolition apostles in factories and farm-yards, and its descriptions will furnish the materials of many an extravagant discourse, and be the household

talk of many a family circle. At the South it will hardly be read with toleration, and there is danger that the bitterness it engenders will make it of no service to the negro.

Mrs. Stowe proceeds, after her manner, to denounce slavery because of this irresponsible power of the master. Her argument is a description of scenes such as we have never seen or heard of, but which, of course, we cannot undertake to deny. It is always easy to attack an institution by dwelling with emphasis upon its abuses. This error of fanatical reformers has been admirably illustrated by the remark, that they hold the abuses of a system so close to their eyes that they can see nothing beyond. Now we can allow Mrs. Stowe no monopoly of feeling, or even of sentiment (though the word is growing disreputable), when we hear of brutal wrongs committed by one man against another; nay, we shall perhaps go beyond her in reprobation of all abuse of that authority which God has given to the white man at the South over the African. But we know more of slavery than she does, though she has undertaken to tell all the world about it, and we refuse to take these things as a picture of the institution. We refuse to judge any system by extravagant pictures of the crimes that disfigure it. We are not ready

at the bidding of Mrs. Stowe, in this great question of slavery, to see only its occasional horrors, because we have seen Christianity always reverenced in the world, though many stains of bigotry, and though the torture and the stake, have more than once obscured it; because children still look up with love and honor to their parents, though crime has come of the parents' power; because the marriage tie has brought untold happiness to men and women in spite of many seasons and places in which it has been mere mockery; because the laws of property are respected still, though the oppression of the rich has wrung from the poor the bitter cry that "property is robbery"; because we believe the mission of woman to be for peace and good-will, though we have read of the siege of Troy, and have known many modern Helens of the agitation-school; because we see nothing without its evils, no Divine institution that man has not defaced, no human institution without its errors. It is in view of all this that we say that Mrs. Stowe has been unjust. In dwelling with great skill and dramatic power upon the abuses of the system, and upon nothing beyond, she has given a most false and wrong impression of what slavery is. She has filled her Northern readers with a delusion.

She is concerned if we reject her deformed image of slavery, making answer to it as we have done, that these horrors are abuses, and are only occasional. Her defence, strongly and eagerly urged, is, that these abuses are "inherent" in the system. She says: "There is actually nothing to protect the slave's life but the *character* of the master. Facts too shocking to be contemplated occasionally force their way to the public ear, and the comment that one often hears made on them is more shocking than the thing itself. It is said, 'Very likely such cases may now and then occur, but they are no sample of general practice.' If the laws of New England were so arranged that a master could *now and then* torture an apprentice to death, without a possibility of being brought to justice, would it be received with equal composure? Would it be said, 'These cases are no sample of general practice'? This injustice is an inherent one in the slave system; it cannot exist without it." It will be observed that this leads to quite another question than the infrequency of these abuses. We have insisted only upon their rare occurrence, and for that reason have refused to allow her descriptions of them to pass for a picture of slavery. What she says about their being "in-

herent in the system" does not make her picture the less a misrepresentation. Is it a defence of the book as an argument against the institution? We still insist that her argument might be turned against almost any existing institution, because there are none that provide altogether against those abuses which grow out of the evil passions of men. If we were to draw a picture of the miserable condition to which men and women are reduced in the great cities and manufacturing districts by the fierce competition which enables the man of capital to hold "flesh and blood so cheap," and if, ascribing this to the liberal legislation that allows him to demand so much work for so little pay, we were to cry out against the present laws of property, our argument would not be more faulty than Mrs. Stowe's. How much of bitterest anguish may be traced to the power that coarse men are clothed with by the conjugal relation! If we were to cry out against matrimony on this ground, and bring up for argument a score of pictures drawn from the worst phases of married life, we should outrage society; and it would be a shallow excuse for us to point to the necessity of these things in the system. As there is in these instances, which might be indefinitely multiplied, danger of abuse of the power

which society gives to one man over another, so it would be absurd to deny the danger that there is of the white man's occasionally abusing the power over the black that has been placed in his hands.

There is everywhere incompleteness in human legislation. A system of government which would raise a barrier against every evil disposition in man would be a clog about his feet. Such a system, based upon the evil that is in men, would be as Utopian as the system of Fourier, which was based upon the doctrine that every impulse is good and must have full play. Society would be burdened with no criminal code if *systems* could correct all the evil tendency of man's nature. But the necessary insufficiencies of legislation are the most fruitful occasions for the exercise of the virtues, which here play the part of the *vis medicatrix* of nature. And they are taking a false view of any system, who ignore the existence and development of these virtues. If they wilfully see nothing but a tendency to abuse, they are turning away from all the good that corrects this tendency. In this matter of slavery, they are turning away from all the best instincts of men, and from all the charities that grow out of the relation. They are turning away from all the faithfulness and

affection that are aroused in dependants by a generous use of power, from all the self-restraint and moral culture that may come from a consciousness of the possession of power, and from all the sympathy that comes from the sense of an obligation to protect.

And here we are reminded of our views in noticing Mrs. Stowe's book, and of the pledges we are under to derive what profit we may from any suggestions that may occur even in the midst of her extravagance and injustice. This point of the vast power of the master is where the whole weight of our duty and responsibility rests. And the answer we make to Mrs. Stowe reminds us of all that lies upon us in the way of duty, and admonishes us of all the opportunities for usefulness that are given to us. While the slaveholder is bringing forward the above suggestions in defence of slavery, he will remember that he is going over the catalogue of his own duties. As we are eagerly urging that the good there is in human nature will supply the deficiencies of human legislation, we are claiming for the slave *moral rights* which arise from the absence of *legal rights.* And the more warmly our defence is urged, the more firmly are we binding ourselves to do our part. And especially we are rejecting that easy Abolition Phi-

lanthropy that looks no farther than to a relief from all these duties and perplexities. The slaveholder who hopes to cut the Gordian knot by shrinking from the claims of his position is rashly throwing away opportunities for which he may be called to make his account hereafter. Shall we in supineness or in fear give up any position where much is required of us because of the danger that lies in our path? Shall a king lay down his sceptre, when he may be the centre of blessings to all his people? Shall the great ones of the earth voluntarily give up the love that may wait upon the faithful use of their power? Shall any man give up the ties of family, of society, because of the duties they bring, uttering the weak and wicked prayer, "These five talents, O God! that thou hast given me, are too heavy upon me; make me like unto thine other servants to whom thou hast given but one talent, from whom but little shall be required"?

Mrs. Stowe does not note any of this profound sense of responsibility in the slaveholder. Indeed, it is a part of her argument to see nothing but blunted feelings, such as she would deprecate for New-Englanders. It is very true that the habitual sight of a class submitting to superior power accustoms us to much that would shock the sensibili-

ties of strangers. But the difference between the two cases is, that we "have our poor always with us," while they who undertake to pity our want of sensibility are spared the sight of the poor that die all unheeded in their great cities. Is it altogether to their advantage that they should have the privilege of cherishing the sharp edge of their sensitiveness, while we are thrown into positions that daily increase our active usefulness, at some sacrifice, it may be, of romantic feeling? The claims of our poor are daily calling for the active benevolence of every slaveholder; while it is only the humane *few* at the North whose feelings are exposed to the risk of being blunted by an acquaintance with the painful scenes of poverty in the next street or the next block. We know of no higher sphere of duty than is presented in the daily routine of our Southern women. We are sure that their home usefulness will not suffer by comparison with the philanthropy that leaves all untouched most abundant harvests at home, for distant fields where there is more to minister to a romantic sentiment. If our humanity were of this stamp, we should be ever preaching crusades against the crime and disease and want that infest the lanes and cellars of New York and Boston. And we might with great propriety get up societies for the

recovery of the free blacks of New England, whose situation is such, if we may believe statistics, that their natural increase is only one twentieth of that of our slaves.

But let us proceed to consider more at length this dependence of one man upon the arbitrary will of another. As this is the essence of slavery, and as the mere enunciation of it carries to most men condemnation of the system, we shall take pains to see whether there is not much exaggeration in the usual estimate of its evils. And if we meet with any success in this, we shall redeem our pledge to profit by the suggestions derived even from extravagance and injustice; because the course of our argument will prove that the position of the slave does not necessarily make him the "chattel" that our Northern friends call him. And if we prove this, our argument will at once force upon us the necessity of unremitting efforts on our part for his moral elevation, and will, at the same time, encourage us to persevere, by the proofs that his position is not incompatible with a higher moral culture than now falls to the lot of most of the overtaxed laborers of the earth. It will show us that it is in reality only at the North that this "chattel" is not esteemed a man. And in urging that the

South has already raised her "chattels" far above the heirs of labor that freedom claims in the crowded districts of all the great centres of population, we shall be encouraged to hope that, if she be allowed to go on in the path she has already entered upon, she may in the end be able to point to these her "chattels" as her "jewels."

Already has the physical condition of the slave ceased to enter into the slavery argument, the Abolitionists in general having given up that, to take, as they say, higher ground. Already does the teaching of the slave rank with the slaveholder next to his duty to his children; and the prints of a solemn sense of responsibility are conspicuous everywhere. If we may judge by the churches that are rising every day for the simple worship of the negro, by the number of cultivated men and women who are bending to the task of the simplest instruction, or by the number of the slaves who are constant and eager attendants upon their churches and Sunday schools, we may not doubt that the labor of the much-pitied African is relieved by far more of religious culture than can possibly fall to the lot of those who are born to the heritage of toil, that begins with earliest childhood, and endures, not only through the strength of life, but until its latest sands are shaken out.

When it is admitted that the physical condition of the slave is so secure that he is not forced to tax his immature strength, or to exhaust his decaying powers, even Northern fanatics should recognize that there is room for cultivation beyond the condition of the mere "chattel." We do not say that the South has done all that she might do to fill the vacant hours of the slave, but she is roused to the task that lies upon her, and we trust that she will not be diverted by an intemperate zeal that would persuade her that slavery is incompatible with any elevation of the slave's character, but rather that a calm consideration of the arguments of her opponents will make her triumph over them by a more faithful discharge of her duties.

In approaching this question of the dependence of one man upon another, we should remember that, in estimating the condition of the slave, we are to compare him with those who are appointed to do the hard labor of life, in regard to whom we are daily uttering the Pharisee's prayer, not as he did, but reverently, "I thank thee that I am not like unto these." And we are to remember, that, though America has not felt the effects of the excess of labor which is at the bottom of the great problem of the day in older countries, she

may see in them what she must one day come to. Her thinking men will inevitably be startled by the despairing tones of the simple claim, "I have nothing, you have much," and will have to confess to themselves the power of such a claim in the mouths of the starving. Let us not hope to escape the problem. It must come, for we are told that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." And already in America some of our great cities are beginning to show the effects of over-population, in radicalism and the occasional triumph of mob law. In poverty also and disease the poor are feeling the first approaches of the great struggle for existence, which ever comes as an attendant curse to the very centres of civilization. It is said that there is a district in Boston in which life is shortened by density of population to an average of 13½ years, human beings being crowded together at the rate of 441,500 to the square mile.* Such a fearful state of things is surpassed only in one district of Liverpool. The accounts that appeared a few years since of the cellar population in New York are scarcely less appalling. The thought of these things, of what has ever existed in the Old World and of what will surely

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* Dr. Dickson's Life, Sleep, Pain, &c.

come upon America, will prepare us for the use of an argument from analogy, by which to find a counterpart everywhere for the objection which is held so fatal for slavery.

Indeed, when we are once thrown into this chaos of the "false relations" of men to each other, there is no halting-place anywhere. There is food for gravest thought everywhere. "Do not be so vain of your one objection." "Do you think there is only one?" Speculation leads on to speculation, until we are brought up at last by the hard question of the origin of evil. And we are almost tempted to say, that it matters not what we have to do; the only question is, with what spirit we do. "Can we not play the game of life with these counters, as well as with those?" But to proceed. This power that slavery gives to one man over another is met with everywhere in society. Caleb Williams! Alton Locke! Mary Barton! Parliamentary Blue Books! Mining Districts! Manufacturing Districts! Combinations of Workmen! Combinations of Masters!—to which shall we point especially? In all is the lesson of one man's power over another. Only yesterday the lesson was taught afresh, in the strike of the engineers' workmen in London. On that occasion labor fairly gave up, and acknowledged that the

power was with capital. In general it is only the abuse of power that makes the power apparent. It must always exist by the law that makes one man superior to another. No two men can stand together but that there is this between them, — the one to rule the other. You may make your laws to govern this and guard against its abuse. But have your laws done so yet? Have they been of avail to help labor against capital, to make the hard man lay down the power that he feels over his neighbor? And because of these things would you unhinge all these "false relations" and begin anew? That is what many sects of reformers have striven for. St. Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, were men of the highest order of talent, but all their theories have been Utopias. Plato's model republic lives only in the brains of dreamers.

Another instance of the power of one man over another is that which society has, at the instinct of nature, given to parents over their children. This has in some countries extended even to life and death. It has always been an incalculable power. For it affects the whole life, and influences the destiny of children, besides that it bends their will in obedience. Its history has had its fatal passages. It has led to vicious education, false

opinions, narrow prejudices, and how often to unbridled passions, the fruit of over-indulgence. Seeing this unlimited power, and moved only by its abuses, many extravagant reformers have taken children altogether from their parents, and made them the children of the public. The Spartans pursued this policy, though not to the extreme, and some of the schemes of modern education have approximated to the same idea.

But, it will be said, the great objection against slavery is that the power of one man over another is so irresponsible, so little restrained by law or nature. Let us see if there is not often in the lot of the freeman a dependence that is more uncertain, more precarious and fatal, than the dependence of the slave upon his master. To begin with education. How completely is the tone of the mind dependent upon the accidents of birth or position! The poor, unheeded boy, brought up in an atmosphere of vice, untouched by any single redeeming influence, literally at war with nature, a stranger to any virtuous precept, ignorant of any distinction between good and evil! The child crushed with too early labor! The orphan thrown upon the careless bounty of the public! The young man whose facile mind is bent by temptations that lead him into fatal opinions, political,

social, or religious! If we think of these things which bend the growing nature irredeemably, we may well shudder at the dependence of men on the uncertain, precarious accidents of fortune. Many good men, looking mournfully at the temptations that beset us, and our feeble means of resistance, or at least at the strange disparities of fortune in this respect, have not scrupled to express their doubts of the retribution of an eternal punishment. And the same feelings, weighing upon the mind of Owen, made him boldly deny the responsibility of men. His theory of human irresponsibility leads, it is true, to absurd consequences; but we speak of these views as the result of an experience of how much in man is the creature of his surroundings, how much forms a part of his unconscious growth, and how subject he is to the uncertain influences about him. The plant that sends its root into the earth turns away from poisonous juices; but the child has no such instinctive discrimination, and grows up upon the vice that fills its atmosphere.

As far as the facilities of education go, the slave is secured at least from physical want, the great temptation to crime, from idleness, and from excessive labor. And the growing spirit of religious teaching secures him from that dependence upon

immoral influences, which the mind unaided can so rarely resist. This growing spirit of religious teaching is a far safer reliance than the uncertain influences surrounding the poor laborers of other countries. It is fostered by a sense of responsibility in the master, by his Christian feeling, by the dependent condition of the slave, and by all the kindness that grows out of the relation. At the North, it has been thought a fanciful notion that the white man should regard himself as the natural protector of the black. At least it will be granted that such an opinion will have its influence upon the moral education of the slave. An answer to much of this is ready for us in the taunt that we should not boast of the education of the slave as long as the reading of the Bible is shut out from him by our laws. We shall be content to say on this point, that this furnishes us with another instance of the insufficiencies of legislation being corrected by what we have called the *vis medicatrix* of nature. The slave's inability to read has given rise to a more kindly feeling, and to a closer connection between the races, than if each slave could read his own Bible. It has induced oral teaching; and the effect of this upon both races no man at the North can conceive. As a proof that the slave who

cannot read the Bible is not beyond the reach of religious instruction, we may recall the policy of Lycurgus, who refused to write his laws, that they might be the better preserved in memory. We are sure that we need not repeat what has been so often said on this subject, — that the laws against reading were the only barrier we could devise against the flood of incendiary publications that threatened our safety. The responsibility must rest upon other shoulders than ours.

Again, the education concluded, men are subject to a thousand influences usually classed under the head of circumstances. And is this subjection so much less dangerous than the subjection of the slave to the unchecked passions of the master? What are these "circumstances" but the pressure of the jarring elements of society? What, indeed, but the bad passions of men? The slave is at the mercy of a master, who must feel more or less the responsibility of his position. The freeman, who is weighed down by the inevitable ills that society is subject to, has no tyrant but the hard laws of demand and supply, stern and unchangeable. The one depends upon a master, whose interest it is to raise him up; the other can look up only to capital, whose interest is antagonistic

to labor. The slave-owner has always before him the effects of his acts, and will be moved to pity by the sight of the misery that is caused by his thoughtlessness or violence. The poor man may be starving in his garret, while he whose thoughtless general order to diminish work or hasty dismissal of an inefficient workman, or whose prudent retrenchment of expenses, has been the cause of the misery, has said the word and passed on, in utter ignorance of how fatally his word has fallen, because there is no visible claim upon him, and the evil is far out of his sphere of life. Is the nature of the slave-owner harder than the accidents of good or bad seasons, upon which the lives of so many depend? "Three wet days will bring the greater part of thirty thousand street people in London to the brink of starvation." * How many thousands depend upon the vices, or the follies, or the uncertain habits of society! A vice corrected may many times afflict the masses with a widening circle of evil, that would make the newly virtuous shudder at the consequences of their reform. The sudden change of a morning or evening beverage, of a lady's bonnet or cap string, would reduce many men and women to helpless poverty. Labor-saving machines have

* "The London Labor and the London Poor."

always been greeted with curses by the poor. In a work now in course of publication,* we are told with much humor, but more true feeling, that the great chancery case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, in the quibbles and subterfuges it gave birth to, was a source of corruption to many natures, while through its tedious length it was the bread that filled many mouths. All the mournful pictures which are charged upon society have this one pervading feature, the weak sinking under the pressure of circumstances that are beyond their control. As long as this force of circumstances has no conscience, is out of view, has no duty or responsibility, it is a more dangerous power than the slave-owner's. In a word, it is mere shortsightedness to talk of the power of the white man over the black in slavery, when the alternative is between that and competition between the races. The one is at least a degree of protection, the other would be extermination, to the weaker.

It is true, as Mrs. Stowe and others object, that the immediate dependence of the slave upon his master impairs the manliness and independence of his character. We are far from making the slave the hero of romance that Mrs. Stowe does,

* "Bleak House."

and we grant much weight to the objection. But look into the crowded labor-markets, and see how men cringe and bow down in the midst of the excessive competition that assails them. The slave enjoys a monopoly of labor; but the freeman, who depends upon the occupation of the great and the little, has resort to the lowest flattery, and to arts that destroy his self-respect and must degrade his character. The evils of competition are not confined to the one hackneyed plague of the excessive reduction of prices. This is as nothing to the daily loss of character that we see involved, and in higher places, too, than among the poorest laborers. Surely the subjection to the superior force of a master does not so debase the character as its voluntary sacrifice, its ready barter for office or profit. For there is more manliness in acknowledged obedience to superior power, than in the smiling subserviency of the sycophant, which makes the whole of life a lie. The general elections in England witness much vociferation of a sort which belies manliness of character. For the debates upon the ballot question furnish numberless instances of tenants whose farms depend upon the vigor with which they shout aloud what their hearts reject. And men are everywhere sacrificing what are

at heart their true convictions, to the standard of an uncompromising "public opinion."

It has been well said, "Men are not corrupted by the exercise of power, or debased by the habit of obedience, but by the exercise of power which they believe to be illegal, and by obedience to a rule which they consider to be usurped and oppressive."

It is constantly urged, that the slave has no sphere of action, that his faculties are crushed and his nature deprived of its proper development. We might pursue the argument from analogy, and point to spheres of life more contracted, to natures more debased; but we have sufficiently indicated the course of such an argument, and leaving it now, we prefer to call attention to the error of those who are constantly pressing this argument. To "do the duty that lies immediately before you" never suggests itself to the far-reaching philanthropy of these people, and thus, though they profess love to the slave, they never think to impress upon him that in every position in life there is a sphere of action wide enough for all men, if they are true to its requirements. In the narrowest circle of being, there is enough to do. There is capacity for improvement everywhere, as there is everywhere room for debase-

ment. Every station has its claims, and these we must freely and religiously fulfil, or there is no merit in us. Whether these requirements are noble or ignoble, there is room for nobleness of nature in the spirit with which we meet them. The humblest martyrdoms are oftentimes the noblest. Hear Carlyle's eloquent definition of a freeman.

"The freeman is he who is *loyal* to the laws of this Universe; who in his heart sees and knows, across all contradictions, that injustice *cannot* befall him here; that except by sloth and cowardly falsity evil is not possible here. The first symptom of such a man is, not that he resists and rebels, but that he obeys. As poor Henry Marten wrote in Chepstow Castle long ago, —

> 'Reader, if thou an oft-told tale will trust,
> Thou 'lt gladly do and suffer what thou must.'

Gladly: he that will go gladly to his labor and his suffering, it is to him alone that the upper Powers are favorable and the field of Time will yield fruit. 'An oft-told tale,' friend Harry! all the noble of this world have known it, and in various dialects have striven to let us know it! The essence of all religion that was and that will be is to make men *free*. Who is he that in this life-pilgrimage will consecrate himself at all hazards to obey God and God's servants, and to

disobey the Devil and his? With pious valor this freeman walks through the roaring tumults, invincibly, the way thither he is bound. To him in the waste Saharas, through the grim solitudes peopled by galvanized corpses and doleful creatures, there is a loadstar; and his path, whatever those of others be, is towards the Eternal."

If the Abolitionists were sometimes to point out to the slave this moral elevation, their title to philanthropists would not be so rudely questioned as it now is. If they would observe without prejudice, they would see that the best and most moral of the slaves are without exception contented and happy, disarming even the malevolence of bad masters; not conscious of the pressure of arbitrary power, as the greater number of citizens live under the laws without being conscious of their restriction. From such as these we hear no murmurs against fortune. For it is only restless and discontented spirits who charge society with all their ills, who look for a panacea in every reform, and are rabid for innovation, though it be any thing but improvement. The most industrious of men are not Communists, nor are the best of women Bloomers.

Mrs. Stowe's favorite illustration of the master's power to the injury of the slave is the separation

of families. We are told of infants of ten months old being sold from the arms of their mothers, and of men whose habit it is to raise children to sell away from their mother as soon as they are old enough to be separated. Were our views of this feature of slavery derived from Mrs. Stowe's book, we should regard the families of slaves as utterly unsettled and vagrant. If such were the case, we should not be prepared to find in the race that exquisite sensibility which Mrs. Stowe claims for it. For God in his wisdom "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." And if African mothers were permitted such slight indulgence of the maternal affection, the maternal instinct would be mercifully blunted in them. The sensibility of those who live chiefly in the affections is very far more acute than that of case-hardened men of the world, of business, or of pleasure. The family affections yield to purposes of state. The blood that flows through royal veins is proverbially a cold current.

We would not speak lightly of such an evil as the destruction of family ties. We deplore it as one of the hard necessities of the poor man's position upon the earth. In slavery we know that it exists as yet more than is necessary to the system. Every day, however, greater efforts

are made among us to lessen the evil. In the mean time we are fain to hope that there is not such misery as would follow a forcible separation in favored families, whose life is altogether in their home feelings. And we know that even a forcible separation of children from their parents is a lesser evil than that children should have to curse their parents for such an education as they are in so many free countries left to pick up in haunts of vice and dissipation, while their parents are engaged in incessant labor; that it is a far less evil than that children should be taught by their parents to use their earliest lisping for lies of begging and imposture, or be driven out to bend their earliest industry to theft; that it is a less evil than that premature toil should deform the body and debase the mind. We think it better that the maternal instinct should be blunted, than that it should lead mothers out to a life of vice for bread for their children. Such things too often happen in countries where the family affections have free play. The statistics of poverty and crime have grown to be familiar reading. And every one will recognize in other states of society gloomier pictures growing out of the family associations under the curse of poverty, than any which are caused by the

separation of families. And be it remembered, that there is no separation like the gulf that opens between members of the same family when crime comes in between them.

We feel confident that, if statistics could be had to throw light upon this subject, we should find that there is less separation of families among the negroes than occurs with almost any other class of persons. Among the rich, the pursuits of education, the claims of extended business, the facilities and inducements of travel, are all motives which do not enter into the case of the slave. It is true that the separation induced by these causes is voluntary, and not so complete as with the negro; but such is not the case with the great mass of emigrants, and with the peasants of foreign countries. With these the separation of families is as complete and involuntary as in the case of the slaves, and, we think, more frequent. For these latter are subject to the commands of masters, among whom public opinion is very decided upon this point; there is in general no inducement to separate families; in sales, they are as far as possible sold together. On the other hand, in districts where labor is in excess, father and son would starve each other through competition, except for the resource of separation.

We should be glad to test by this favorite illustration of Mrs. Stowe's the truth of what we have said in reference to the dependent condition of the slave as compared with that of the laborers of other countries. We think that, if we could ascertain facts, they would uphold us in the assertion, that the will of a master is not a more precarious dependence than the hard fortune that usually besets the poor man's lot. For authority, we may refer to Sir Charles Lyell's Travels in the United States. His observations upon slavery have brought abuse upon him, because they labor under the charge of being too favorable. He says (Vol. II. p. 78), "I was glad to find my experience borne out by that of a Scotch weaver, William Thompson of Stonehaven, who travelled in the years 1841–42 for his health, in the Southern States. He supported himself as he went along by manual labor, and lived on intimate terms with persons of a different class of society from those with whom I had most intercourse." Thompson on his return home published a small book, in which (as quoted by Sir Charles Lyell) he asserts, that "the members of the same family of negroes are not so much scattered as are those of working-men in Scotland, whose necessities compel them to separate

at an age when the American slave is running about gathering health and strength."

Before concluding, we would speak of the moral tenure by which we hold the slave, and of the future. According to our conception of the question of slavery, we are practically concerned only with the facts of the case. Theories may help us to explain these facts, or they may give us hints as to the solution which the future may bring forth. But our duty is with what is immediately before us.

We trace the African race through every stage of its existence, from its appearance as represented upon the Pyramids of Egypt, to its present relations with the white man, and we find that here, in a state of bondage to a civilized and Christian people, it has approached nearer to civilization and Christianity than ever in isolation within its own tropics, or in any other relation with the whites. In slavery its condition is still improving. And thus it is our duty to keep them until, at least, we see a fairer future before them than any we could now dream of as the result of emancipation. Theories may strive to explain these facts; they cannot explain away our duty as resulting from them.

Human ingenuity has exhausted itself in specu-

lating upon the consequences of the contact of the different races of men. Life, which is defined as "the exchange of mutual relations," is said to be most perfect where the greatest diversity of elements is harmonized into one; and we of the United States are pointed to as a confirmation of the theory. But life, on the other hand, has been said to have no permanence except in the climate and under the circumstances where it first originated; and we of the United States are pointed to as weak and unstable, wanderers from our natural homes, and destined to die out. Some speculators have said, that all enduring civilization has arisen after an impulse from abroad, that has roused the nations to activity of thought, as in England and the countries of the Continent, in Ancient Italy and Greece. And De Tocqueville, with more subtile and striking discrimination, says, "Whenever barbarous nations have derived knowledge from a foreign people, they have stood towards it in the relation of conquerors, and not of conquered." "When the side on which the physical force lies also possesses an intellectual preponderance, the conquered party seldom becomes civilized; it retreats or is destroyed." But while philosophy is, in vain endeavoring to ascertain the relation in which

nations stand to each other, and theorists are endeavoring to solve our future and that of our slaves, our duty is before us, and not the less plain that ethnology has not yet thrown any light upon it. What we have to inspire us with confidence is, that, while contact with the white man has been annihilation to the Indian, it has brought elevation and religion to the negro. This is the ethnology that is most in point.

We may be much concerned in the great question that is dividing the scientific world as to the unity of the race. Not that we would found an argument of right on superiority of nature. For whatever conclusion men may come to as to the diversity of origin of the races, none will ever practically doubt the great brotherhood of man. But perhaps the science which teaches us that the negro race has existed, with its present inferior physical organization unchanged, since 3500 years before Christ, — which has weighed the brain of the negro, and classed it below that of the white man, — may connect with these physical inferiorities such a mental constitution as shall account for the fact, that the one race has never been so highly civilized as when under the guardianship of the other. If, on the one hand, the prospect of such a result shall incline us to kindness and forbearance, the possi-

bility that science will in the end place the two races on a level can have no practical bearing upon the obligations of our present duty.

Whether the assurance of physical well-being is conducive to such a tranquil nervous condition in the negro as to constitute the most important element in his prosperity, or whether his condition of subjection in the Slave States saves him from fatal vices to which he is prone, the economists may one day settle. We are practically concerned only with the fact, that the natural increase of the slaves in America is far greater than that of the free blacks, — greater even than that of the whites. We quote from a pamphlet of "Randolph of Roanoke," reviewed in De Bow's Review, November, 1850. "That the white population of the United States about doubles itself in every period of twenty-five years (here the immense immigration must be considered). That the slave population of the United States more than doubles itself in thirty years from the natural increase alone. That the free negroes of the Southern States double in about thirty-five years from the natural increase alone. That the free negroes of the Northern and Western States double in about every period of forty years from the natural increase alone. The free negroes of New England have dwindled and dwindled,

until they have almost reached a stand-still. Their annual increase amounts to but one tenth of one per cent. They could not double themselves at that rate short of four hundred years."

We are tempted sometimes to rest upon the necessity of compulsory labor in hot climates as the best explanation of the facts which slavery presents to us. For in the favored (as the phrase goes) climates men are without any stimulant to exertion. Nature yields an easy sustenance without the necessity of sustained labor. Two or three days' work in the week is sufficient to acquire the means of existence, and the capacity for labor is lost by idleness during the other listless days. There is no hard struggle with difficulties to brace the muscles of the body and to develop the character. There is no barren rock to conquer by hard toil, — toil which is to gain for man the mastery over himself, to teach him earnestness and strength of purpose and self-restraint. Hence it is that modern civilization has departed from those soft southern latitudes where its seat was of old, and where the severe and patient toil of agriculture was achieved by compulsory labor. As soon as labor became free, its greatest triumphs were in colder regions and on harder soils. Hence it is that industry has been paralyzed by emancipation in Ja-

maica; and the French colonies in the West Indies are threatened with the like bitter fruits from the *coup de sentiment* of 1848. Hence it is that Africa, except by the aid of slave labor in Egypt, has done no work upon God's earth. In contrast with the general character of laborers in hot climates are our slaves, inured to continuous toil, increasing more rapidly than their free brothers, and rising every day in civilization and religious culture. It is surely another instance of the value of labor, which, as it is the destiny of man, has ever been his redeemer. In contrast with the scanty results of the race elsewhere is the great staple of our Southern States, a vast product, which gives a dignity and a value to negro labor such as it can nowhere else lay claim to.

We would not in these remarks be understood to rank our Southern States with the tropical climates, which paralyze the energies of men. We have had reference only to the African, whose constitution in America has not undergone any material change from its natural adaptation to the tropics. We see that, in unrestrained competition, the white man among us is superior to the negro, slave or free, in all labor in which our malarious fevers do not interfere with him. And this not by reason of the physical debility caused by the cli-

mate, for in that respect the negro is less oppressed than the white man. Hence our meaning is, that the sluggish, nervous organization which is unaffected by the heat of our suns and by our miasms may require the stimulus of stronger motives to exertion than the love of physical well-being would afford in a country where existence itself is comparatively easy and cheap. In the white man, on the contrary, it may be that greater nervous energy and a more sensitive organization make him obedient to impulses that would fail to move the negro. But we repeat, all this is mere speculation, hazarded as an explanation of the facts that slavery presents to us, the facts themselves being our only teachers of duty until a clearer light be thrown upon the subject.

It has been often suggested that a noble mission is designed for the slaveholder, in making him the means of civilizing Africa through the agency of the slaves on this continent. If there be any thing in this suggestion, the ill-success of the Liberia scheme, and the recent resolutions of the free negroes at the North, claiming a right to their share of this continent and refusing to be expatriated, show that it is too soon yet for any practical efforts in this direction. But we should not forejudge the question, and if this idea be

borne in mind, it will give additional encouragement to the slaveholder in the performance of his present duties to the slave.

We have written with a hope to prove that the slave is not by his position necessarily below the reach of moral and religious cultivation. Our object in this has been not so much to answer the objections of the opponents of slavery as to prove for the slaveholder that his dependent laborer is capable of better things than the world would have him believe, and especially to remind him that whatever arguments he urges in favor of the slave's position are all of necessity so many pledges for the faithful discharge of his own duties. For the truth of our views we appeal to the future. Not in any vain confidence of the result; but for the present, at least, with hope. As long as we see that, with the great mass of laboring men, labor is in the way of intellectual or religious education, the question is not decided against us. For there is room to hope that the present insufficiency of the slave's education is not the result of his servitude. Should the world leave us behind, and the great majority of laborers be taught to combine all necessary labor with a due degree of elevation of character, we shall then have reason to fear that the slaveholder is standing in the light of the slave.

Upon the solution of this question depends the future of slavery. If the relation between master and slave is clearly proved to be incompatible with Christianity, the problem will then be to discover the safest and speediest severance of the tie that now so forcibly binds them together. But even then, it will not be the slaveholder's duty to brush the slave away from his path, as the white man in America has done the Indian. What though Mexico and the Amazon valley shall receive a feeble remnant, the responsibility will be none the less upon those who were impatient of their burden. Whatever is done, then, should be done with caution and forbearance, carefully guarding against two different and equally dangerous impulses; the one, the selfish desire to be rid of an evil; the other, the rash conclusion that any sacrifice that counts in money is worth what it costs. "Something more than liberty is due from the master to the slave"; and a large debt may be owing, though twenty millions sterling be paid in "liberty."

If, on the other hand, as the tendency of things encourages us to hope, that part of the African race which has been transported to America is to become a truly Christian people by means of the missionary efforts of their masters, their fetters will not be suddenly struck off. But they

will gradually cease to be felt. For the change will be wrought through the Christian virtues of the slaveholders, and the relation will then be a tie of sympathy between the two, "reasonable service" required by one, and cheerful obedience granted by the other. "Christianity," says a late Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, "knew that where the spirit of Christian love is infused, there the outward form of slavery not only loses its terrors, but becomes capable of generating great virtues." *

We are reluctant to seem to admit the possibility that the relation of slavery should necessarily exclude the attainment of Christianity by master or slave. For, on the contrary, we think there is much in slavery, if rightly appreciated, that is eminently calculated to give rise to the Christian virtues. For it is the only system of labor in which a *recognized moral obligation enters into the contract.* In slavery, if its whole scope be properly appreciated, society is held together by the ties of moral duties clearly defined, instead of depending upon that cold irresponsibility that presides over the *traffic* for labor in the great labor-markets. They taunt us with the traffic in flesh

* Sewell's Christian Politics, p. 323.

and blood; but how is the reality? The Southerner who buys his slaves at the auction-table is buying with the conviction pressing upon him that his property comes to him with weighty claims of humanity and of Christian duty that must not be denied. The capitalist who bids for labor abroad buys the sinews and muscles of the man, and there the contract ends. If the pittance per week be insufficient for wife and children, it is nothing to the capitalist, for there is no obligation on him beyond the payment of the wages. They taunt us with owning the slave, body and soul. Yes! We would have the whole South feel that the soul of the slave is in some sense in the master's keeping, to be charged against him hereafter. The great marts of labor abroad are not so encumbered; flesh and blood are bartered away, but no man who buys is oppressed with any thing beyond. They taunt us with denying all legal rights to the slave. Theirs is the hard letter of the law, — nothing that is not "in the bond"! With us the moral code becomes positive law where legal rights end. Society ceases to be a state of war; because a new element is introduced, an element which secures protection for the poor and demands forbearance from the rich, its principle of authority being an ever-present

and well-defined moral obligation, which, as a security for Christian action, is in strong contrast with the stern demand-and-supply principle.

It is impossible as yet, whatever be our prejudices or prepossessions, to decide this question of how far slavery will prove conducive or antagonistic to the development of Christianity in the slave; for the South has not put forth her strength in her task of regeneration. In the first place, there is an external necessity upon her to deny to the slave the advantage of reading, an advantage which oral teaching may supply the place of for a season, but which will be demanded in the end by the increasing wants of the negro. And, in the second place, the difficulty of this whole subject, added to the bitterness caused by fanatics at the North, has made the South fearful of any rash efforts, and cautious even to neglect, perhaps also over-sensitive. We have seen an analogous state of feeling among the better classes of Englishmen, who, until lately, have feared to tamper with the question of the poor, and their education. They have shrunk from it as a subject beyond their ken. They feared to touch it at all, lest a wrong step might involve inextricable ruin. And they so anxiously discountenanced all discussion of the labor questions, that those subjects,

which in France were giving rise to much profound thought and careful study, had no place in England but among Chartists and Socialists.

The South has, however, within a few years, instead of quietly accepting the conclusions of the world without, been earnestly pressing for a solution of the problem required of her. If she can be spared the suggestions of a violent philanthropy that outruns her well-considered plans of reform, she may hope to develop the moral question of slavery *æquo pede* with the economical question. It may be that our prejudices and our experience, which has never been fruitful of horrors, influence our judgment; but we think that heretofore the moral and the economical aspects of the question have been quite in accordance with each other. In morality, it is beyond a doubt that, though slavery be not a necessary condition of labor, it is the only one under which the African can exist in the South. Because, were he exposed to free competition with the white man, the difference of organization is so great that the one race would be crushed by the other. Hence this protection which slavery gives to the negro is the most humane provision that can be made for him, at least for the present. Economically, we arrive at the same result. For whilst the necessity of protection to the slave's labor contains

the inference that such labor is not in all occupations the cheapest, yet experience proves that slavery is the only means of deriving profit from the presence of the African among us, and the only means of producing the great staples that are suited to our soil and climate. For the slave labor that is valued at eighteen cents a day in Jamaica is the sluggish labor of a few hours only.

There is another view to be taken. The three millions of bales of cotton that are now growing, every pound of which is looked for anxiously by the consumers, is of incalculable influence upon the stability of the system. The thousands in this country whose interest is bound up in the growth of this great staple, the uncertain mass of English operatives whose lives hang upon the supply, and the result to English society in case of any sudden disorganization of labor, — all these things demand the attention of thinking men, and will check the extravagance of any but the wildest fanatics. And the field for cotton goods, that is every day enlarging, as the East is answering to the impatient calls of commerce, gives no prospect of a speedy check to this vast power of the produce of the slave. And, again, there is in slavery, economically considered, a great element of permanency in the fact that a due recompense is

secured to labor. The philosophy that startles us by the conclusion that "property is robbery," is the offspring of a state of society in which labor is inadequately rewarded; and such a doctrine will continue to disturb society as long as labor can scarcely purchase life. A favorite argument against the organization of labor in slavery is, that all men have a natural right to the fruits of their own labor. But perhaps there is equal truth in the Socialist doctrine, that all men have a natural right to life in return for labor. And there is more of permanency in the system which denies the former doctrine than in that which denies the latter.

Amidst all the perplexities and uncertainties which shroud the future, we may hold this for certain, that slavery will serve a great purpose for the negro. Whether he be destined to rise to an equality with the white man, and to break the fetters which bind him, as in that case he will most assuredly do, whether he is to continue for a long time yet as a laboring class bound to the white man in a peculiar relation, "generating great virtues" and becoming a relation of kindliness and charity, or whether, as some who rate him lowest suppose, his destiny is to be always driven to unwilling labor, a school of discipline is undoubtedly his greatest present need. Labor, even though it

be unwilling labor, is a thousand times better for him than the careless indolence or vice which our latest information from the scenes of British philanthropy details as the effects of premature freedom. The following eloquent sketch of the uses of labor, from the pen of Dr. Channing, is of such universal application, that we are tempted to quote it in confirmation of our views.

"I have faith in labor, and I see the goodness of God in placing us in a world where labor alone can keep us alive. I would not change, if I could, our subjection to physical laws, our exposure to hunger and cold, and the necessity of constant conflicts with the material world. I would not, if I could, so temper the elements that they should infuse into us only grateful sensations; that they should make vegetation so exuberant as to anticipate every want, and the minerals so ductile as to offer no resistance to our strength and skill. Such a world would make a contemptible race. Man owes his growth, his energy, chiefly to that striving of the will, that conflict with difficulty, which we call effort. Easy, pleasant work does not make robust minds, does not give men a consciousness of their powers, does not train them to endurance, to perseverance, to steady force of will, that force without which all

other acquisitions avail nothing. Manual labor is a school in which men are placed to get energy of purpose and character, a vastly more important endowment than all the learning of all other schools. They are placed, indeed, under hard masters, — physical sufferings and want, the power of fearful elements, and the vicissitudes of all human things; but these stern teachers do a work which no compassionate, indulgent friend could do for us, and true wisdom will bless Providence for their sharp ministry. I have great faith in hard work. The material world does much for the mind by its beauty and order; but it does more for our minds by the pains it inflicts, by its obstinate resistance, which nothing but patient toil can overcome, by its vast forces, which nothing but unremitting skill and effort can turn to our use, by its perils, which demand continual vigilance, and by its tendencies to decay. I believe that difficulties are more important to the human mind than what we call assistances. Work we all must, if we mean to bring out and perfect our nature."

And the labor to which the slave is subjected in his present discipline is not excessive; for it is proved to be compatible with an almost unprecedented natural increase of the race. The scene of his labor, moreover, is in the midst of those who are

far above him in mental cultivation and Christian feeling. And, finally, his state of dependence upon this superior class is such as to arouse in a peculiar degree a disposition to teach and to elevate the laborer whose entire service is due to them. Taking these things into view, it is not extravagant to assert, that, if there be any good in human nature, slavery may be made to minister to great ends. And we hope that, as "the thoughts of men are widening," more justice will be done to an institution, which, if it disappears because of an increased energy and higher character in the blacks, will have had its day of usefulness, as the source of that energy and that elevation of character.